



OFFICE OF LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR REBECCA SKILLMAN

Indiana Office of Rural Affairs

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Indiana Leading the Way in Rural Partnership

Lt. Governor Becky Skillman recently welcomed home the Indiana delegation from the National Rural Development Partnership Conference held August 21-22 in Washington, DC. The conference was organized by the Partners for Rural America and is the annual opportunity for the 37 state rural development councils to meet, share ideas and receive updates from the federal government.

“Indiana has made great strides in rural development efforts over the past year. While most states are looking at how to survive without federal funding, Indiana is flourishing with the support of the newly formed Indiana Office of Rural Affairs and the legislature-approved rural development funding,” said Lt. Governor Skillman.

Indiana boasted the largest delegation consisting of Mayor Bill Graham of Scottsburg, IN and Chair of the Indiana Rural Development Council (IRDC); Joe Pearson, Director of Indiana’s Office of Rural Affairs; Phil Anderson, Executive Director of IRDC; Jim Rice, IRDC Council Member; and Sarah Yeager, Program Manager of IRDC.

“Thanks to visionaries like Lt. Governor Skillman, we have a lot to be proud of here in Indiana and it showed at the national meeting,” commented Mayor Graham. “While many states have cut funding to their rural communities, Indiana has recognized rural communities as growing players in the future success of our great state and has funded efforts to support them. The Indiana Rural Development Council has been the conduit as it brings together the cross-section of players in rural communities to offer guidance.”

The delegation came away with the reminder that we must continue to be innovative in finding new solutions to increase rural entrepreneurship, regional initiatives and leadership for Indiana’s small communities. The conference drove home the fact that the federal outlook for funding of rural development councils is bleak so rural leaders must continue to pursue unique funding solutions for the future.

The Office of Rural Affairs was approved by the General Assembly in the 2005 legislative session, at the request of Lt. Governor Skillman. For the first time in Indiana, small cities, towns and rural counties will have a stand alone agency devoted to their needs. A number of key programs, including those of the Indiana Rural Development Council, have been combined in the new Office of Rural Affairs.

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